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D/I, USAF, CONTRIBUTION TO NIE-36

BURMA: PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL OF THE PRESENT REGIME

USAF Declass/Release Instructions On FileI. STABILITY AND MILITARY CAPABILITIES OF THE BURMESE GOVERNMENTB. Size, combat effectiveness and political reliability of the military forces.1. Burmese Air Force (BAF)(a) Strength, Organization and Disposition.

The BAF has a strength of 50 aircraft of which 33 are assigned to tactical units.

AIRCRAFT STRENGTH, ORGANIZATION, DISPOSITION

Review of this document by CIA has

☒ CIA has no objection to declass☐ It contains information of CIA interest that will remain classified if

Authority: 100-100

It contains nothing of CIA interest

Date 12 Mar 81 Reviewer QC 97-56TRAINING AND TACTICAL UNITSTRAINING

10 Tiger Moth

7 Oxford Trainer

Total

17

NO. 1 SQUADRON

14 Oxford Bomber (Modified trainers)

3 Auster

1 Spitfire

4 Consul

11 Dakota

Total

33

All units of the BAF are located at Minaladen Airport, Rangoon.

(b) Personnel Strength

	<u>OFFICERS</u>		<u>ENLISTED</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	<u>TRAINED</u>	<u>IN TRAINING</u>	<u>TRAINED</u>	<u>IN TRAINING</u>	
PILOTS	12	8	7	2	29
NAVIGATORS	2	2	-	3	7
GUNNERS	-	-	2	-	2
ALL OTHERS	11	4	403	135	553
TOTALS	25	14	412	140	591

The total personnel strength of the Burmese Air Force is 591 of which

39 are Officers and 29 are Pilots.

(c) Air Facilities

The majority of the thirty-one principal airfields of Burma have been abandoned or are used infrequently, with a consequent deterioration of the air facilities. The principal base of the Burmese Air Force is Mingaladon Airport, near Rangoon, where the entire air force is based. Occasionally airfields farther north, such as those at Meiktila and Lashio, are used for limited air support of ground troops operating against insurgents in those areas. Lighting, servicing, repair, and radio facilities are non-existent except at a few of the major airfields that are being used by the BAF and civil airlines.

In the event of a Chinese Communist invasion of Burma, the airfield complex in the vicinity of Myitkyina, the airfields along the Irrawaddy River, and the airfields in the vicinity of Rangoon would assume considerable tactical and strategic importance. It is estimated that they could be restored to limited operational use after considerable rehabilitation.

(d) Combat Effectiveness

An integral part of the Burmese Army, the Burmese Air Force is organized into a headquarters, one tactical squadron, and a training school. All matters of organization and training are guided by a 25-30 man British Mission under the direction of 8 British officers.

Equipment of the BAF consists of British World War III trainers, trainers modified for bombing, transports, and one Spitfire fighter aircraft. British supervised maintenance is considered good with serviceability at an estimated 70 percent. Serviceability would be extremely limited other than at Mingaladon Airport. Fuel must be airlifted to forward bases

and hand pumped into the aircraft. Due to the almost complete lack of maintenance facilities and equipment, a few days of intensive operations from forward bases would undoubtedly find the incommision status of aircraft unsatisfactory. There is no military assistance scheduled for the BAF by the United States at this time.

The capabilities of the Burmese Air Force are limited to small-scale support of ground troops and tactical reconnaissance. Against insurgent forces, these capabilities are fairly effective when they can be employed. In the event of a Chinese Communist invasion, it is estimated that these capabilities would be of negligible value.

Seasonal weather conditions severely limit all air operations, particularly during the late summer and early autumn months.

(c) Political Reliability

The Burmese Air Force is considered loyal to General Ne Win, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and the degree of the BAF political reliability will be determined by this relationship.

C. Capabilities of military forces against individual and combined insurgent operations, and against direct Chinese Communist invasion.

1. Against individual and combined insurgent operations.

At present, the Burmese Air Force is too small and ineffective to take a decisive part in the operations being conducted by the Burmese Government against the various insurrectionary factions. Some air support of ground troops is provided through light bombing and strafing operations. The BAF also has a limited capability for tactical reconnaissance. However, the capabilities of the BAF against individual and combined insurgent operations are only fair.

2. Against direct Chinese Communist invasion.

Assuming an attack by the Chinese Communist Air Force, the Burmese Air Force would have only a negligible defensive capability since it is composed primarily of trainer and transport aircraft and has no early warning system, GCI, or anti-aircraft defense. Factors of distance, however, offset this vulnerability.

II. CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS OF THE BURMESE INSURGENTS

The Burmese insurgent forces have no air capability. There is no evidence that the Chinese Communists have furnished any air aid to the insurgents, either in the form of air support or material aid. If in the future the Chinese Communist Air Force should furnish air support for Burmese insurgents, it is estimated that the CCAF would experience many operational difficulties due to the terrain factor and the guerrilla nature of the insurgent operations.

III. CAPABILITIES OF THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS TO INTERVENE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY

A. Chinese Communist capabilities to provide material and technical assistance.

Inasmuch as the Burmese insurgents do not possess, and probably will not develop, an air capability, Chinese Communist air material and technical assistance is not considered.

B. Capabilities of the Chinese Communists to provide military forces, assuming present commitments elsewhere.

The Chinese Communist Air Force is estimated to have approximately 860 aircraft available at present, and additional aircraft could be made available by the Soviet Air Force if the need should arise. The bulk of the

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aircraft available to the Chinese Communists are currently located in North China and Manchuria. Aircraft could be redeployed to prepared airfields in southwest China for operations against Burma, but the logistical considerations involved would be a serious limiting factor.

There are nine Chinese Communist airfields within 120 miles of the China-Burma border which, if repaired and maintained, could be used by fighters and ground attack aircraft in support of the Burmese insurgents or Chinese Communist ground forces. Three airfields in the vicinity of Kunming, 230 miles from the Burmese border, could be used for bombing operations against North and Central Burma. Some airfield construction and rehabilitation have been reported in southwestern China, but there is no evidence of stockpiling of POL and other aviation supplies sufficient to support a major air effort.

In view of the above and its commitments elsewhere, it is estimated the Chinese Communist Air Force would only be capable of very limited air action against the Government of Burma, either in air support of the Burmese insurgents or the Chinese Communist ground forces. Use of transport aircraft for supply operations would be a particularly practicable form of assistance although limited in scope.

In view of the limited nature of Communist air action in Korea to date, redeployment of Chinese Communist aircraft without including jets to airfields in southwest China could be effected without affecting substantially the present type of Communist military operations in Korea. However, redeployment of any significant proportion of the CCAF for action against Burma, would remove much of the present threat of large-scale Communist offensive

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air action in Korea; and reduce air defensive strength in eastern China and Manchuria. Logistical support of the Chinese Communist Air Force in operations against Burma, even for short-term operations, would be seriously handicapped as a result of the Korean operations.

IV. CHINESE COMMUNIST INTENTIONS TOWARD BURMA

B. Effect, if any, of war in Korea on Chinese Communist intentions.

The effect, if any, of the war in Korea on the long term intentions of the Chinese Communists toward Burma is unknown. However, if prior to the Korean war, the Chinese Communists were contemplating early aggressive military action against Burma, the present lack of evidence of preparations for invasion indicates at least the postponement of such aggression.

E. Probable present plans and tactics.

Chinese Communist ground strength in southwest China has remained relatively stable since the outbreak of the Korean war. However, in view of the extensive involvement of Chinese Communist military forces in the Korean conflict, the consequent logistical strain, and the serious losses suffered by their ground forces, it is estimated that their over-all capabilities for offensive action have been severely curtailed to the point where they are not planning open military moves against Burma in the near future. Present Chinese Communist tactics with respect to Burma appear to be more in the field of subversive activity, to which limited air supply operations would be a useful adjunct. Increased activities of the Burma Communist Party and the Burma Workers and Peasants Party reflect the intensified Chinese Communist efforts in subversion and propaganda.

V. CONCLUSIONS AS TO PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL OF THE PRESENT BURMESE REGIME.

A. Against insurgent forces alone.

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So long as the insurgent forces do not receive outside aid, it is estimated that the Burmese Government will be able to maintain its present military position.

B. Against insurgent forces with indirect Chinese Communist aid.

The chances of success of the Burmese insurgent forces would be considerably increased by Chinese Communist material and training assistance. Although plans for such assistance have been reported, there has been no evidence that the plans have been implemented. Chinese Communist commitments elsewhere have probably been the most important limiting factor on any such aid which may have been contemplated. In summary, it is estimated that the chances for ultimate success of the insurgents will be in proportion to the degree of aid which may be furnished them by the Chinese Communists.

C. Against insurgent forces with direct Communist aid.

It is estimated that the present Burmese Government would be defeated quickly and overthrown in the event that the Chinese Communists provided the insurgent forces with substantial direct military assistance.

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